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THE PALIMPSEST

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Jesse Clement

Jesse Clement was born in Dracut, Massachusetts, on June 12, 1815. He was the eighth in line from Robert Clements, the first American ancestor of the Clement tribe. Jesse himself was the son of Asa and Elizabeth Wilson Clement, his mother being the thirteenth of fourteen children of Captain Jesse Wilson, a soldier of both the French and Indian War and the Revolutionary War. His father, Asa, although called a "gentleman farmer" by contemporaries was also a "captain" of the militia.

Jesse Clement lived and worked on his father's farm until he was almost twenty years old. Farm work did not appeal to him, however, and he took every opportunity to read a book, a magazine, or a newspaper, while ploughing a field, going to the mill, or waiting for his grain to be ground. During the noon hour young Jesse read while his father "snored" blissfully in deep repose. At night, young Jesse read by the dim light of a tallow candle. He apparently had no problem about his

leisure and is said to have wasted no time in idleness—a far cry from the present generation of children growing up with no form of diversion offered them beyond movies, radio, television, and picture magazines

As a child, Jesse Clement was always a strict Sabbatarian, a practice he followed when he came west to Iowa to edit and publish the *Dubuque Times*. He never missed a church service, even in his travels, and he invariably reported to his readers on the content of the sermon and the delivery of the minister.

He was also a follower of Lorenzo Dow from the moment he heard that bearded orator give his first temperance talk. Young Jesse took the temperance pledge and was elected treasurer of the Dracut Young Men's Temperance Society. Jesse Clement kept his temperance pledge all his life. On one occasion, when a certain man was reported to have died of "congestion of the brain," Clement did not hesitate to write that the man did not have "brain enough to get up a congestion" and really died of "delirium tremens." So thoroughly inbred was he in the temperance crusade that he considered his pledge a contract made with his Maker. He felt that, next to becoming a Christian, the best act of his life was taking the temperance pledge.

Temperance was not the only crusade that motivated Jesse Clement. He had admired Lorenzo

Dow's long beard and in later life became an "anti-shaving" advocate, on the ground that shaving was a waste of time and that it was the mission of the beard to protect the face of man. These qualities were reflected in his travels through Iowa.

Jesse Clement received his education at the *Academical and Theological Institution* in New Hampton, New Hampshire, from 1835 to 1842. He was an excellent student; the school catalogs indicate he was made a tutor while still a student (in 1839 and 1840). In 1841 and 1842, he was engaged in teaching only. Clement always wrote of his experiences at New Hampton with warmth and fondness, declaring that the "associations that cluster around that place are among the tenderest of my life."

Clement gained considerable experience while a school teacher. He taught his first school in the *Wilmington, Vermont, school district*. He received \$12 per month as a teacher and "boarded around" with the parents of his students. It was while he was a student-teacher at New Hampton that he and twenty-six other students were "buried in Christ" in baptism. During these formative years Jesse Clement wrote poems and articles for various publications. On August 21, 1841, while still in school, he married Mary Elizabeth Blood, of *Dra-cut*, and set up housekeeping in New Hampton.

An important and significant era in Jesse Clement's career opened when he moved to Buffalo,

New York, on December 16, 1842. One of his New Hampton schoolmates, John S. Chadbourne, had established a magazine with encouraging prospects that was described on its title page as a "semi-monthly journal of literature and fine arts." Originally called the *Literary Messenger*, it soon became known as the *Western Literary Messenger*. In May of 1844, Jesse Clement became the sole publisher of the *Messenger*. The following year, he became the sole editor and continued in that capacity until he came to Iowa in 1857.

When Jesse Clement arrived in Dubuque he found the Key City of Iowa bustling with activities. In August of 1857 Dubuque had seven newspapers, six of which were dailies—the *Times*, *Tribune*, *Express & Herald*, *Republican*, *North-West*, and the *Democrat*—the latter a German language paper.

The Dubuque and Sioux City had been built westward out of Dubuque to Nottingham (Earlville). The telegraph reached the Mississippi in 1858. The whole northeastern quarter of Iowa was fair game for subscribers for the best newspapers. Competition was keen and it was with this in mind that Jesse Clement felt the need of going out into the hinterland to solicit subscribers and shunt trade in the direction of Dubuque.

The post offices in existence in Jones, Linn, Benton, and Black Hawk counties in 1859 contrasts sharply with those remaining in 1968.

Benton

1859	1968
Burk	Atkins
Gomersal	Belle Plaine
Gwinville	Blairstown
Linwood	Garrison
Pickaway	Keystone
Shellsburgh	Luzerne
Taylor's Grove	Mount Auburn
Unity	Newhall
Urbana	Norway
Vinton	Shellsburg
Williams	Urbana
Woods	Van Horne
	Vinton
	Walford
	Watkins

Jones

1859	1968
Anamosa	Amber
Bowen's Prairie	Anamosa
Castle Grove	Center Junction
Duane	Hale
Edinburgh	Langworthy
Fairview	Martelle
Fuller's Mills	Monticello
Highland Grove	Morley
Isabel	Olin
Johnson	Onslow
Langworthy	Oxford Junction
Madison	Scotch Grove
Monticello	Wyoming
Scotch Grove	
Temple Hill	
Walnut Fork	
Wyoming	

Black Hawk

1859	1968
Barclay	Cedar Falls
Blakeville	Dewar
Cedar Falls	Dunkerton
Cedar Valley	Gilbertville
East Waterloo	Hudson
Enterprise	La Porte City
Gilbertville	Raymond
Hudson	Waterloo
Laporte City	
Lester	
Mullarky's Grove	
Waterloo	

Linn

1859	1968
Banner Valley	Alburnett
Boulder	Cedar Rapids
Cedar Rapids	Center Point
Central City	Central City
Centre Point	Coggon
Dry Creek	Ely
Forfax	Fairfax
Kingston City	Hiawatha
La Fayette	Lisbon
Lisbon	Marion
Marion	Mount Vernon
Mondieu	Palo
Mount Vernon	Robins
Nugent's Grove	Springville
Necot	Toddville
Palo	Troy Mills
Prospect Hill	Viola
Sisley's Grove	Walker
Spring Grove	Whittier
Springville	
Valley Farm	
Waubeck	
Wapsa	
Western College	

The growth of the four counties through which Jesse Clement traveled has been phenomenal.

County	1859	1960
Jones	13,475	20,693
Linn	17,720	136,899
Benton	8,063	23,422
Black Hawk	7,095	122,482

While two of the above counties have remained agricultural, two can now boast the second and fifth largest cities in the Hawkeye State. Indeed, Cedar Rapids alone has twice as many inhabitants in 1960 as did the four counties in 1860.

The gleanings of Jesse Clement on his journeys through Iowa in the years immediately preceding the Civil War form a valuable addition to the recorded history of Iowa. His observations, coupled with the advertisements taken from contemporary newspapers found in the State Historical Society's collections, give a clear and concise view of Iowa as it appeared eleven decades ago.

WILLIAM J. PETERSEN

WILLIAM LEE,
BOOKSELLER AND STATIONER,
AND BLANK BOOK MANUFACTURER,
Washington Street, - - - Iowa City,
Blank Books ruled and made to every pattern. All
kinds of School Books and Stationery at Wholesale and
Retail. Also, a large variety of WALL PAPER.
Book-binding in all its branches.

The subscriber having rented a part of the
Machine Room in Dewey's Mill,
Would respectfully inform the inhabitants of Linn and
adjoining counties that he will keep on hand a general
assortment of
FURNITURE AND CHAIRS
of his own manufacture, at prices to suit the times.
Job turning done with neatness and despatch. Produce
and Lumber of all kinds, taken in payment.
Cedar Rapids, February 9, 1860. F. UBEL.
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